



Eagle Wing



The Magazine Of
Groomsport Presbyterian Church

Christmas 2019



The Eagle Wing was the first emigrant ship to leave Ulster for America. She sailed from Groomsport in September 1636, carrying 140 Presbyterians in search of a life free from persecution in the New World. Fearful weather, however, forced them to return home after two months at sea. Although she did not reach her destination, the Eagle Wing became the inspiration for others to make their attempts and since those days, several million people have left our shores, taking with them their culture and traditions. These cultural links with America are celebrated each year at the North Down Eagle Wing Festival in August.

Our church magazine takes its title from this significant piece of local history. In 2002, Jennifer Hulme, a member of the congregation and well known local artist, created the cover design, which strikingly depicts the symbols of the wing, sail and cross.



"We seek to be a welcoming community of God's people.
We believe our mission is to hear and share His Word and
to reflect **God's unconditional love** - as we proclaim
and celebrate the good news of Jesus Christ
and strive to be a **welcoming, serving and reconciling**
community."



Minister's Musings	4
Congregational Record	5
News	6
Letter From The Editor	7
Princeton Report	8
Engagement News	9
Particular Places And People	10
Presbyterian Women, Twelve Days Of Christmas	11
Tuesday Club, Film Club, Friendship Lunch Dates	12
Aladdin	13
Children In Church, Who Looks After The Children?	14
Sunday School & Bible Class, Nix Family Update	15
How I have Achieved 50 Years Of Marriage	16
Update On Trini	17
Christmas Shoebox Appeal	18
World's Biggest Coffee Morning, Holly	19
Knysna Update	20
Audio Service	22
Five Finger Prayers	23
Charlotte Elliott	24
Just As I Am	25
Merry Christmas!	28
The Spiritual Art Of Savoring	30
Berlin Wall	33
The Rifleman And The Major	34
New Elders, A Christmas Gift	36

Minister's Musings

We are all aware that the Christmas season can bring its stresses. Even coping with the basics, getting the shopping in, choosing the gifts to give and putting up the decorations, add to the stress.

I suspect we've all had the stress and frustration of trying to untangle Christmas tree lights. Well, a couple of years ago, one Tesco store tried to help its customers by employing someone who could help untangle those tangled lights.

The job advert on tesco-careers.com had the title, "Christmas Light Untangler" and gave the following description for the 36-hour-a-week job: "This new position will offer you the chance to show that 'Every little helps', by running the unique in-store service with a friendly, flexible approach and making a genuine difference to the little things that matter to our customers this Christmas." The first duty included "Man and managing the Christmas Lights Untangling stand." And naturally that would include, "Successfully untangle customers' Christmas lights neatly, quickly and efficiently and in an orderly fashion" The advert further stated that the ideal candidate should "be able to untangle 3 metres of Christmas lights in less than three minutes".

We all like the beauty of our Christmas tree lights, especially when they are untangled! At this season of the year, in Groomsport, we reflect on the true and untangled beauty of Christ, who came as the Light of the World.

When light shines in the darkness it reveals, it lets you see things that otherwise you couldn't see. And so it is with Jesus, he came into the world to reveal God to us, as he was Immanuel, God with us. And as he reveals God to us, he also reveals something of ourselves, our sins and failings. But of course the good news is that the Light of the World removes the darkness and so offers to us all, forgiveness and hope.

When out on a dark night for a walk, the light from a torch or even the light from the moon can help us stay on the path. Jesus came as the light to show us the right path in life, to help us and to direct us on the right way.

And so may I invite and encourage you to come along to the various Christmas services in which, no doubt, we will think and sing about this major theme at Christmas.

May you have a very happy Christmas and blessed New Year.



Congregational Record



DEATHS

10th Oct, Mrs Irene Thompson, District 15
21st Nov, Mr Jim Hall, District 24
2nd Dec, Mr Stephen Millar, District 18
3rd December, Mrs Joan Maxwell, District 3
"Blessed are they who die in the Lord"



BAPTISMS

27th Oct, Myles Oliver, son of Matthew and Melissa McGovern
"The promise is to you and your children"



NEW MEMBERS

Mr & Mrs John Langston, District 7
We warmly welcome these new members to our fellowship, assuring them of our interest and seeking from them their active support.

EAGLE WING

The Magazine of Groomsport Presbyterian
Vol. 47 No. 2
Christmas 2019
eaglewing@groomsportpresbyterian.com

EDITOR

Amanda McWhinney
07841 650173

ADVERTISING

(028) 91462552
Circulation 1400 pa
Cost £40 pa colour £30 B/W
Three issues
Spring, Autumn, Christmas

USEFUL CONTACTS

Minister
Rev Paul Dalzell
07909 896123
minister@pauldalzell.uk

Assistant Minister
Heidi Biermann
07513 710733

Clerk of Session
Alastair McQuoid
(028) 9188 3695

Sunday School
Margaret McCready
(028) 9146 4361

Organist & Choirmaster
John Ekin
(028) 9145 1536

Church Secretary
Julie McClurg
(028) 9146 2552
office@groomsportpresbyterian.com

**Flower Fund**

A massive thank you to all the ladies who give of their time and talents to display such beautiful flower arrangements in our church each Sunday. Also, thank you to those members of the congregation who donate generously throughout the year to the Flower Fund. It is greatly appreciated.

Many thanks, Joyce



Congratulations to Lois Goldie on receiving her Gold Duke of Edinburgh award from Prince Edward on 10th October 2019.

Lydia and Trini in Forfar, Scotland at 'Big School'.

**Congratulations**

Paul and Rosemary Farrington (nee Manson), who recently completed the New York Marathon in just over four hours. This was Rosemary's first marathon, while it was Paul's second. They raised the magnificent sum of £3500 for 'Save The Children' charity.

Thank you for allowing me to come back and put together the Christmas issue of the Eagle Wing magazine. After my first magazine in the summer, I have now got to grips with all the things that I need to prepare. It's a long process that starts with asking for articles about six weeks ahead of printing. Followed by a large amount of time sitting staring at a screen while the laundry piles up and the children are left to their own devices, or should I say 'on their devices'.

I previously eluded to the fact that the summer issue had caused me extreme anxiety.

My computer broke down several days into the preparation of the magazine. I almost cried when I realised that all my work and everyone's articles were gone. My computer was new and under warranty, so after a few tense emails with the manufacturer, they told me that it would need to be sent to Poland for repair and that would take three weeks.

That would never do, with a deadline rapidly approaching and all my work on a lifeless hard drive, I loaded my car with my very heavy computer and drove to HELP Computer Centre in Donaghadee. Tom, the man in the shop, was very sympathetic, and learning that my computer was under warranty he very carefully opened it up, then somehow (magically) retrieved my magazine work and articles from my hard drive along with everything else I had saved on my computer. I was then able to get everything transferred onto my old laptop and proceeded to work on the magazine. Meanwhile, my computer went away for a three week holiday to Poland.

All's well that ends well, the rest of the magazine preparations went without a hitch. Everyone was complimentary and I was happy knowing that whatever happens for the Christmas issue would be easy in comparison.

It has been nice this time, no stress and a computer which is still relatively new and running efficiently. I have enjoyed chatting with all of the contributors and I drank a lot of tea while doing my work.

One of my favourite articles is from Ryan Pearce; it was so good to receive his update. Rev Dr Katie Nix sent me a wonderful photograph of her family, her little boy Steven looks like he's enjoying himself wearing his Christmas t-shirt. Queenie's dear friend Betty Jeeves, has written a beautiful article about Charlotte Elliot, Alistair McQuoid had me laughing at his shortcomings while driving in Scotland. There are many more articles, I have enjoyed them all.

My only wish this Christmas, as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians, is that you will be blessed abundantly, and you have all you need. Merry Christmas!

Amanda



Home Improvement Tip:
Bring your family to church!



Princeton Report 2019

Rev. Paul, with Catherine, travelled again this year to Princeton on 12th November 2019, not knowing the exact number of applicants for the internship at Groomsport. It turned out to be just five, in total. One young woman, one older man in his sixties, and three young men, who were interviewed over two days.

Jacob Kennedy from Wilson, North Caroline was the fifth to be interviewed and to whom the intern post in our congregation for 2020/21 was offered. Jacob has accepted and we look forward to him ministering with us, beginning in September 2020.

Paul and Catherine were also able to meet up briefly with Ryan Irmer and attended daily prayers with him. This is a short service each day, Monday to Friday, at 11.30 am, when the Seminary community students, faculty, and staff gather in the Miller Chapel for worship. They also met with Ryan Pearce for breakfast on their arrival and for an evening meal. Both Ryans send warmest greetings to our congregation.



Jacob Kennedy

As well as interviewing, Paul had an important meeting with the President of Princeton Theological Seminary, Dr Craig Barnes. Dr Barnes expressed Princeton's great appreciation for all that we have done in Groomsport for previous interns and continue to do. He had met some weeks before with Ryan Pearce, and he said that Ryan spoke highly of Groomsport Presbyterian congregation and the great benefit and blessing his time had been with us. As Princeton values highly the relationship with Groomsport through the internship, Dr Barnes emailed Paul to confirm that, commencing with Jacob's internship, they will support this with an annual donation of \$12,500.

Finally, the Director of Field Education at Princeton, Dr Chester Polk is retiring on the 2nd of December, after many years in this post. Dr Polk and his office are responsible for the internships and finding places for



the students worldwide. In recognition of his imminent retirement, Paul gave him a small gift of a silver Celtic cross and a card which our Clerk of Session, Alastair, and Paul had signed, wishing him God's blessing in retirement on behalf of our congregation. He was deeply touched and very much appreciated it.

Princeton Theological Seminary



Ryan Irmer, Catherine & Rev Paul Dalzell



Rev Paul Dalzell & Ryan Pearce

Engagement News

Life is good here in the Chicago area. The church I serve is going through a period of transition in which we are discerning a new mission focus and the institutional structure we need to make it happen. I've been having so many fruitful conversations with congregation members about the future. It is truly an exciting time.

Besides that, I'm planning a wedding! Jonathan and I got engaged last September and now we are tackling every little detail for a simple ceremony and reception next year. We already have a date: September 25, 2020. Most of Jonathan's family is local to downstate Illinois, so we will be having the ceremony at his Lutheran church in Springfield. The reception will be in the park where we got engaged.

My family in Puerto Rico is very excited and are already making plans to travel for it. One thing we are discovering is that it is hard to keep a wedding small! There are so many friends and family we would love to join us for our big day, but we have to be practical. So we hope that, even at a distance, you will be praying for our new life together and wishing us the best.

with love in Christ,

Lisa Lopez

www.groomsportpresbyterian.com



Particular Places and People

Dear Friends,

It's hard for me to believe that it's already been a few months since I began here in September. During this time, it's been an absolute joy to get to know many of you in our church and your homes, to share in worship with you, and to live in the beautiful Groomsport area. It's been a busy few months for me: I have led worship services, conducted pastoral visits, and led and participated in various events for people of all ages. Through all of this, I have come to feel settled here. A few months ago, Groomsport was just a place on a map to me. Now, it's a home, made up of a certain location and the particular people who are here.

As I have continued to feel at home here, I have been reflecting on the value of living in a particular place with particular people. The American poet and farmer Wendell Berry explains the value of being rooted in a particular location: "No matter how much one may love the world as a whole, one can live fully in it only by living responsibly in some small part of it. Where we live and who we live there define the terms of our relationship to the world and to humanity. We thus come again to the paradox that one can become whole only by the responsible acceptance of one's partiality" (The Art of the Commonplace, 117–18).

Although in some ways my year here is about adventure and exploring the world broadly, what I'm finding is that my time here is more about accepting my partiality, about living well in this particular congregation and village. Being here broadens my view of the world, even as I live in this specific place.

This balance of being rooted in a certain location but also being part of the world as a whole is seen in the Christmas season. Jesus Christ became a specific person in a specific time and place. And yet, that specific person came to earth for all of us in every time and place. Jesus loved both particular people and also humanity in general. By being a particular person, Jesus took on the burdens of all of humanity. Jesus shows us what it looks like to live in a particular context and yet to see the ways we are connected to the broader world.

Right now, our context is here, with one another. By living fully in this particular context, and by loving ourselves and each other in all of our individuality, we somehow learn more about what it means to be a part of the whole world.

I'm excited to continue being rooted in this community, and I'm excited to continue learning more through this community about what it means to live in the broader world. Perhaps this season can inspire us to become even more deeply rooted in where we are and who we are with. If Christ showed his love for the whole world through the places he was in and the people he was around, we also can show our love for the world through our particular context and through our love of one another. May the peace of Christ be with you all in this Christmas season.

Heidi Biermann

Discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes,
but in having new eyes.
Marcel Proust



Presbyterian Women

Ladies of all ages are welcome to come along and join us. We meet on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month at 8:00 pm in The Archie Agnew Hall. You will receive a warm welcome, friendship and fellowship.

Our programme for next year is below:

13th January - Victorian Fashions: Joanne Henderson *

27th January - Pastor Keith Lindsay: Flower arranging with a difference *

24th February - Our own intern, Heidi Biermann and
Bible Study for the Women's World Day of Prayer *

9th March - NI Screen Archive Film and Video *

23rd March - Final night and AGM

The PW Service will be on Sunday 15th March, when the speaker
will be Rev Liz Hughes.

Remember, you do not have to be a member if you would like to join
us for a particular speaker; you will be made very welcome.

*In addition to our meetings, we are pleased to announce
our Spring Coffee Morning on
Saturday 21st March 10.30 am -12 noon*

We have been asked why we will no longer be sending gifts to Malawi. Sadly, the carrier is no longer able to provide transportation. We thank you for all your support over the years.

Twelve Days Of Christmas

Another take on that well known song, The Twelve Days Of Christmas:

A Partridge in a Pear Tree - Jesus

Two Turtle Doves - The Old and New Testaments

Three French Hens - Faith, Hope and Love, the Theological Virtues

Four Calling Birds - The Four Gospels and/or the Four Evangelists

Five Golden Rings - The first Five Books of the Old Testament

Six Geese A-laying - The six days of creation

Seven Swans A-swimming - The seven colours in the rainbow

Eight Maids A-milking - The eight beatitudes

Nine Ladies Dancing - The nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit

Ten Lords A-leaping - The ten commandments

Eleven Pipers Piping - The eleven faithful apostles

Twelve Drummers Drumming - The twelve points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed

Anon



The Tuesday Club



The Tuesday Club meets at 2:00 pm in the Walter Nelson Hall, on the following dates:

- 7th January - Walker Ewart, raconteur *
- 4th February - John Shepherd *
- 3rd March - Ulster Bank *
- 7th April - RNLI Donaghadee Lifeboat *
- 5th May - Belfast Giants Coach

The Film Club

The Film Club runs once a month in the Walter Nelson Hall, everyone is welcome. The film Club starts at 2:00 pm and there are refreshments.

- 21st January - Bertie and Elizabeth. The story of King George VI *
- February - No film this month due to the pantomime *
- 17th March - The Quiet Man *
- 21st April - The Lost Prince



Friendship Lunch Dates

The lunches will be held in the Walter Nelson Hall at 1:00 pm, on the following dates:

- Wednesday 11th December *
- Wednesday 29th January *
- Wednesday 26th February *
- Wednesday 25th March

Lunch is £5, the friendship and fellowship are free!

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.
Helen Keller



**Turnstones Drama Group
Presents**

Aladdin

**Walter Nelson Hall
Main Street
Groomsport**

**Thursday 20th February - 7:45pm
Friday 21st February - 7:45pm
Saturday 22nd February - 2:30pm & 7:45pm
Adult £10 / Child £5**

**Tickets on sale in the Walter Nelson Hall
on Saturdays 8th & 15th February
from 1:30pm to 2:30pm
contact Mervyn - 028 9146 9994
or Church Office - 028 9146 2552**



Children In Church

There you are at church. Your toddler is restless perhaps even a little boisterous you try to silence them and nothing. You try to pacify them with food or toys and nothing. Eventually, you resort to the last thing you wanted to do: you pick them up and before a watching audience, you make the march out of the church. All the while you're a little embarrassed, maybe a little frustrated too. You might even think to yourself 'there's no point in coming to church, I get nothing out of it, because I have constantly to care for my kid'.

I want you, mothers and fathers, to know just how encouraging you are to so many. The elderly woman, who often feels alone beams with a smile at the sight of you wrestling with your little one, she's been there before. She knows how hard it can be, but she smiles because it brings back precious memories. Seeing young parents and their small children brighten her day. She may have just received bad news about her health but seeing the vitality of young ones removes, if but for a moment, her fears.

The older man, who always seems to be grouchy, notices you too. He's always talking about how children in this day have no respect or sense of goodness. But he sees you, a young family, in church every week. Like clockwork, he can depend on the sight of you and your young family. You give him hope that maybe the church isn't doomed after all; there are still young parents who love God enough to bring their restless children to church.

Bring your children to church! If we don't hear crying, the church is dying. As hard as it might be for you as a parent who is half asleep, keep on doing what you're doing. You are an encouragement and you are starting off your children's lives as you should.

Anon



Who Looks After The Children?

Lynda Walsh

In Groomsport, the two churches join together to provide organisations for our young people. This has gone on for many years, some fantastic people as leaders. The leaders work quietly in the background, week after week, for the benefit of our children. It is great to see the organisations so well attended and the church halls full of fun and laughter every week.

Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Boys Brigade are bringing enjoyment and Christian values, to the young. We as a church family owe a great deal of thanks to these leaders who continue to provide activities for our children. To those of us 'sitting on the sidelines', we should never take for granted their valuable work and thank every one of them for their continued commitment.

Sunday School & Bible Class

Sunday School and Bible Class meet as usual each Sunday morning at 10:15 am in the Walter Nelson Halls. At present we are beginning to practice for our Gift Day Service which will be on Sunday 15th December at 11.30 am. All the children will have a part to play in this service during which gifts will be laid at the foot of the Christmas tree and then taken to the Belfast Central Mission for distribution to many needy families. These gifts are always most gratefully and graciously received.

Since the number of children attending Sunday School continues to be small we are again inviting members of the congregation to bring gifts also. During the service, the children will collect these gifts and place them under the tree.

Last year's response was absolutely wonderful and we hope that you will be equally generous again this year. Please put your gift into a Christmas bag, do not wrap it as it will have to be unwrapped before being distributed and the bags can be used again.

We will have a short Carol Service at Sunday School on the 22nd December when parents and friends are invited to join us. We hope Santa will also be able to come along.



There will be no Sunday School on 29th December and 5th January. We will resume on 12th January 2020.

May I wish all a very happy Christmas and a peaceful, blessed new year.

Please continue to uphold the work of Sunday School and Bible Class in your prayers.

Margaret McCready

Nix Family Update



Dear Groomsport

The Nix family is settling well to our new home. The transition to St. Louis and to a new congregation has been very smooth and the kids are really enjoying being so close to their extended family. I am having a wonderful time at Grace United Methodist Church. It seems like this is a very good match and that we will enjoy a long ministry together. We miss you all and send our love.

Katie, Eric, Elizabeth, Steven, and Rebecca Nix

How I Have Achieved 50 Years Of Marriage

(with a little help from my wife) by Alastair McQuoid

My wife Freda and I recently celebrated 50 years of wedded bliss and when the editor, Amanda, requested that I write an article for this edition of the Eagle Wing I thought that I could pass on some nuggets of wisdom. There are a large number of stumbling blocks which are placed in the way of the normal loving husband and his devoted wife achieving such wedded bliss, so I thought I could use this literary masterpiece to pass on a few hot tips as to how others may emulate my feat.

Firstly it is a very good idea never to buy your wife flowers from a garage forecourt. The divorce courts are full of litigation which only commenced when the poor husband, after some minor aberration, and seeking to be granted absolution through the gift of a bouquet of flowers, makes the mistake of going around the corner to the local Spar garage to make his purchase. The marriage will wither almost as quickly as the flowers.

"You're not going out in that?" When you hear your wife make this affirmative statement, the wise husband will immediately return to the bedroom and remove the offending garment (most likely a sweater bearing the tell-tale marks of last night's spaghetti bolognese down the front) to be replaced by a clean one. I find it best not to eat food that is apt to spill down my front.



to the eponymous Horseshoe Bar for a read of the Scottish Daily Mail with a pint and a pie. That's what this grumpy old man calls a good day's shopping with the wife!

I wonder how many marriages have got into trouble through differences of opinion as to the best way of reaching your destination in the car. I consider the recent achievement of 50 years marriage is largely down to adopting the safest course of action, which is of course always to listen to the wife. I learnt this valuable lesson on one notorious occasion when driving north in Scotland, it was gently suggested, by the excellent navigator, that we need to exit the M8 at the next junction. Knowing better, I ignored the directive and continued on. Of course, I had to eat a fair amount of humble pie after driving aimlessly around the side streets of Govan for half an hour, hopelessly lost.

Coronation Street and Strictly Come Dancing must surely feature strongly in the consultations many couples have with their marriage counsellor. These TV programmes are endless, extremely noisy and to any reasonably minded husband seem to have the effect of a narcotic drug on his wife. All couples aspiring to be happily married must successfully work out a method of dealing with the extreme pressure placed upon them by these regular programmes.

There are many other excellent pieces of advice which I can impart, such as never expressing annoyance at the strong smell of onions cooking in the Kitchen; however, you will have to await reading my next excellent article which has been commissioned by a national newspaper for its family advice section.

Finally, one of the 50th anniversary cards Freda and I received from good friends was addressed "to one of the happiest and most content couples I know". So I must have done something right!

*Only Two things are necessary to keep one's wife happy.
One is to let her think she is having her own way and the other, to let her have it.*
 Lyndon B Johnson

Update On Trini

Dessie & Sandra Finlay

Many people have been asking how Trini has been getting on. Trini (or her proper name, Trinity) has now gone to her next stage of training. 'Big school', in Forfar, Scotland, where she has a personal trainer called, Lydia.

Lydia keeps us up to date with Trini's progress via photographs and phone calls. Trini is already wearing a full Guide Dog harness and doing lots of road safety work; traffic lights and crossings, around the town of Forfar. She still enjoys finding a seat for Lydia in coffee shops, the library etc. Lydia says she loves working with Trini as she has such a lovely personality!

We hope that she will go on to her third and final stage of training shortly after Christmas.

Our next Guide Dog in training is Roxy. She was eight weeks old when she arrived and as you can see, she is a very cuddly labrador retriever.

Heidi and Roxy already get on well together!



Once you have had a wonderful dog, a life without one, is a life diminished.

Christmas Shoebox Appeal

Michael Steele (On behalf of The Mission Committee)



In September this year, we asked the congregation to fill shoeboxes with gifts that will be sent to disadvantaged children all around the world. We know that it can difficult to think of Christmas presents so early in the year, but I think we were all moved by the short film that showed the joy and happiness on the faces of the children that so gratefully received their Christmas boxes.

What really took us by surprise was the speed at which the empty boxes disappeared from the vestry, many without leaflets explaining the process of getting them filled and ready to be sent off. Thank you for your patience for waiting for the next batch of leaflets to be ready the following Sunday.

Some of us had fun folding the flat packs which were needed to supplement our initial supply of ready wrapped boxes. It was a bit like one of those tasks in the 'Generation Game' and a few of the prototypes left something to be desired. However, like Ikea furniture, we became experts as we went along!

Over subsequent weeks a steady flow of Christmas boxes (this time filled to the brim) were returned to the church and started piling up. By the time the deadline had been reached, we have no fewer than 92 boxes!

After the evening service on the 19th October, we gathered them all at the front of the church and did the final count. Anyone that lingered to chat, including our minister, was roped in to help fill the cars so that we could take the boxes away to be stored safely. The central collection was still a few weeks off. Christmas certainly came early in our house with about thirty wrapped boxes sitting in our downstairs lounge. Just as well our boys were beyond that age of curiosity that would have meant putting a 24-hour guard on them.



On the morning of Tuesday 12th November, Amanda, Maureen, Julie and I met in the car park of Ballycrochan Church which was the main collection point in our area. This time the cars were unloaded and our boxes added to those that had already arrived.

It was good to see the response of the local community to such a worthy cause. At this time of year, our own thoughts turn to Advent when we prepare for the greatest gift of all, the birth of our Lord Jesus. What a truly wonderful gift from God, that we didn't deserve, but so freely given with tremendous love. If these Christmas boxes reflect that love in a tiny way, then we can be assured that we are doing God's will. As Jesus said "*As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*"



Thank you to everyone who has supported this project as well as the many other calls we have made on your generosity in the past year.

World's Biggest Coffee Morning

On the 21st September we, as a family, held a coffee morning to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support.

Initially, we were going to have it in our own home, but then we wondered if it would be well enough supported to have it in the Walter Nelson Hall. We decided to take a leap of faith and have it in the hall and we need not have worried. The coffee morning was a fantastic success; it was really well supported. The buzz in the hall was proof that everyone was enjoying the craic and the magnificent total of £1150 was raised.

We would like to thank everyone who helped in any way either by baking, serving, doing dishes, donating or attending. You were all great and very much appreciated, thank you all very much!

The Chestnutt Family



Holly

Holly was first used by pagans to decorate for the festival of Saturnalia. When Christians began celebrating Christmas in honour of Christ, they adapted that decorating practice to reflect Jesus' life and death. Holly's pointed leaves symbolise the crown of thorns and its red berries symbolise Christ's bloodshed on the cross. Because holly thrives and its berries retain their brilliance even in harsh winter conditions, non-Christians saw it as a symbol of eternity, which is fitting for Christians as well.

Knysna Update

Stanley & Hazel Megahey

Hazel and I have just returned from Knysna, Western Cape, South Africa where it was colder than we expected. The rain had come and reservoirs in the Western Cape are full compared to last year. However, the situation varies from state to state. In the Northern Transvaal, farmers are culling cattle as fodder is virtually non-existent. In Orange Free State, where our friend, Judith and her family farm and breed Nguni Beefmaster cattle (similar to Dexters in size, but with a huge ship-shaped mouth that means the ground is not damaged when the cattle graze) the lack of rain and drought has made their business difficult. Boreholes are being sunk and conservation of water all over South Africa is at a premium.



(Photo is the home of Lee Erasmus after the fire)

Knysna Presbyterian Church is growing as Rev Tim Hawkridge builds on the foundation of Rev Wayne Van Heerden. They have two new Malawian elders Nzeru Nyirenda, Jairus Kachingwe, along with Oscar Mwale, who has been an Elder for a few years. These new Session Members and their children have made a serious addition to the fabric of the Church.

There is a Malawian service in their language once a month, and this is about to double. After Sunday Service, tea and coffee are provided as further integration of the church communities. In the past, the Malawian ladies left after Sunday School and did not stay, this has changed and it is exciting. Sunday 17th November was bring a friend Sunday. Gillian Tigue brought her music class and two Malawians sang a traditional hymn in their language. There was a very good attendance.

There is vibrancy in the Church, but unfortunately, the European presence is not expanding as fast as the Malawians. Rev Tim is not concerned, as his belief is that European numbers will expand as the church moves forward. The Church needs Europeans for financial reasons.

The Knysna Presbyterian Church Property has had a makeover. The roof has now been completed and the next stage, the Church Hall is underway. Veronica, Rev Tim's wife, has worked hard to make it a welcoming place of worship. The entrance to the hall has been decluttered. The Sunday School area has been remodelled to accommodate the rising number of children. The window overlooking the garden has been removed and patio doors installed. Julie Mayne, Elder and wife and some say, boss of the Session Clerk, has worked tirelessly at the entrance and in the garden planting flowers and vegetables which are brilliant for the outreach work. It all looks well and the garden area will be well used in the weeks ahead.



Knysna Presbyterian is fortunate to have a PW which they call Woman's Auxiliary. They have the Church and Outreach in their DNA. The Leisure Island Festival was on the week we left; not great timing by us. This is the big fundraising event of the year, the church has the Jam Jar Stall along with the preserves, cakes and home bakes etc. The preparation for the Festival event is a lot of work. The ladies have developed another fundraising event as well as their hamper sale. Each month after church, tables of harvest produce, plus lightly used and once loved items are sold. Kachingwe has been a great success, the ladies are so proud of their achievements, they raised over R3500 for the Hall revamp.



During our trip we visited Maria's outreach in Rheendall where she feeds children after school. Maranatha is going well, this is a good school and at present Cynthia is looking after seventy-two children. This provides more financial problems as the health and safety officer wants extra measures in place. This is a photograph of Maria and four of the children she has looked after on her feeding programme along with the Rev Tim Hawkridge.

Change for Change was started by Tony and Blanche Duff when the story of a woman with two children lost her husband as a result of a car accident and also lost her home and car. She walked her children to school, which took 75 minutes each way and then worked in town to make ends meet. Tony and Blanche helped her get back on track by providing transport. They then started putting red tins, to collect small coins, in the golf and yacht club. Churches came behind the project with two golf days and two vintage car rallies, per year bringing in much needed funds. Voluntary contributions are also made. Change for Change help those, who through no fault of their own, have hit hard times and need support to get back on an even keel. In ten years Change for Change has helped 51 families. The families receive a voucher for R1000 per month to buy food and personal necessities. Tony has received some beautiful letters of thanks, which encourages him no end.

South Africa has its problems and financial mismanagement by the Government is not helping. Loeriehof Nursing home was getting help from provisional government. Loeriehof residents are mainly white and mixed-race coloured. Vermont Nursing Home has black residents. Loeriehof had its support cut to nearly zero, but Vermont support has been increased. This is White Apartheid.

Loeriehof is a major problem as costs are increasing new fund-raising measures are needed. Even though Tony has had a set back with a heart attack, he is developing new initiatives to help Loeriehof and its residents as they are being forgotten, sometimes by their family and the state.



Jim Sands (L), Joan Huskisson, Yvonne Roy (front)

Joan is wife of marmalade Supremo, Dr Ian Huskisson, who sadly recently passed. Joan presented us with a jar of marmalade from Ian's last batch, which took three days to make.



Rev Dr Roger Purce was in the pulpit in Groomsport on Sunday 17th Nov. His Message was simply: only the Lord can perform miracles. The link between Knysna and the Knysna Presbyterian Church and Groomsport began when, with the support of Rev Dr Roger Purce, Gillian McCutcheon held a concert in Groomsport to raise funds for Epap. Epap feeds 5000 children every day on the Garden Route. The R40000 raised from the concert was a major benefit for the feeding project.

The work in Knysna continues to be supported by Rev Paul Dalzell and our Mission Committee as they have raised awareness and supported of the needs in Knysna and the church. Groomsport's support not only helps the Knysna community but in turn also helps the Malawian community in Knysna support their own families back home in Malawi.

Knysna congregation would have had difficulty without the support of Groomsport and the miracle of their answered prayers. We hope in future our two congregations can learn more from each other and support each other in new ways.

Audio Service

Have you ever wondered how the Psalms and Hymns appear on the projection screen every Sunday? Yes, they have to be collated and uploaded onto the computer in the order of service.

How is this done? In the week before each service Rev Dalzell and John Ekin, our organist, decide which items of praise are going to be used in accordance with the theme of that Sundays teachings. The Order of Service is then emailed to Richard McCreedy, who painstakingly searches the electronic hymnal and creates the file for projection.

During the week Paul, Heidi or visiting Ministers will sometimes prepare their own additional contributions for the service which can include visual slides or videos. These will also be emailed to Richard during the week before the service for inclusion in the appropriate place in the order of service. This also applies to our mission talks, where there is nearly always slides and in some cases, video presentations.

Great, the easy bit is done. Not quite!

Occasionally there can be a requirement to add audio-visual material in the minutes before a service. As you can imagine, this can raise the heart rate a little and can take a little more time to ensure the smooth running of the service. Then during the service, a member of our AV team has to use the computer to project the slides, moving them on at the appropriate time, which requires a lot of concentration!

All of our services are recorded. If you know of someone who is not able to make it out to worship, for whatever reason, please also let us know and CDs can be provided for them. Similarly, if you would like a CD of a particular service, please speak to Richard.

I hope this gives an insight as to what is involved in the presentation of our Audio-Visual system for use in our Sunday services.

If you would like to know more about our Audio-Visual system, you can speak to any member of the team: Richard McCreedy, Ellis McWhinney, Adam Steele, Matthew Steele or myself.

Dan Collins

Five Finger Prayers

James 5 13-18, The Prayer of Faith

13 Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

17 Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

Prayer is a conversation with God, not a formula. Yet sometimes we might need to use a "method" to freshen up our prayer time. We can pray the Psalms or other Scriptures (such as The Lord's Prayer), or use the ACTS method (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication). I recently came across this "Five-Finger Prayer" to use as a guide when praying for others:

- * When you fold your hands, the thumb is nearest you. So begin by praying for those closest to you --- your loved ones (Philippians 1:3-5).

- * The index finger is the pointer. Pray for those who teach --- Bible teachers and preachers, and those who teach children (1 Thessalonians 5:25).

- * The next finger is the tallest. It reminds you to pray for those in authority over you --- national and local leaders, and your supervisor at work (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

- * The fourth finger is usually the weakest. Pray for those who are in trouble or who are suffering (James 5:13-16).

- * Then comes your little finger. It reminds you of your smallness in relation to God's greatness. Ask Him to supply your needs (Philippians 4:6,19).

Whatever method you use, just talk with your Father. He wants to hear what's on your heart.
by Anne Cetas

Taken from Our Daily Bread®, © 2017 by Our Daily Bread Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.



Charlotte Elliott

Betty Jeeves

Charlotte Elliott, a Victorian Hymn writer, was born in the South London district of Clapham in 1789 and died in Brighton in 1871, aged 82. Her Grandfather was a famous evangelical preacher. Her family, who belonged to the evangelical wing at the Anglican Church taught her Christian piety.

Elliott was a famous, humourous poet through her youth. At the age of 32, she suffered from a serious illness that left her disabled for the rest of her life. Then her lifelong spiritual mentor César Malan, a Swiss minister and hymnologist, counselled her to replace rage and inner conflict with peace and simple faith in God. From that day on, she turned her literary talents to hymn writing. Although sometimes depressed by her condition, she always felt renewed by the assurance of salvation and she responded to her Saviour in the hymns with her strong imagination and a well cultured and intellectual mind.

By the invitation of Harriet Kiernan and the suggestion of Rev Hugh White, Elliott became the editor of Christian 'Rememberance Pocket Book (1834-1859)' and published 'The Invalid's Hymnbook' in 1834.

Elliott wrote about 150 hymns. Her most famous, Just as I am, is widely used in English and North American Hymnals today. The hymns are simple, devotional and full of consolation for those in sickness and sorrow.

'Just As I Am, Without One Plea', written in 1834, was first published in leaflet form in 1835. It was then published in the 1841 edition of the Invalid's Hymn Book. It appeared again with the title 'Him That Cometh To Me I Will In No Wise Cast Out' (John 6:37) in 1849.

In 1834, Elliott moved to Brighton and lived with her brother, the Rev Henry Venn Elliott. One day, when everyone in her family had gone to a church bazaar to raise funds for a charity school, Elliott was left alone contained by her sickness. Though depressed with feelings of uselessness and loneliness, she recalled the message 'Come to Christ just as you are', which she had received from César Malan during the darkest period of her soul. She then overcame her distress to write this hymn.

The repetition of the short line 'O lamb of God, I come' is a commitment to a Jesus Centred life. People aren't 'good enough' and aren't 'not good enough' to come to Jesus. It is through God's initiative, pardon, promises and the love mentioned throughout the hymn, that everyone can come to Jesus.

Just like Elliott, people will face conflict, doubt, and fight tears within, but one can find rest in Jesus. Because of it's simple, but powerful message this hymn has been widely used in church meetings like those led by evangelists D L Moody, Billy Graham, and John Stott. The hymn is suitable for alter calls and also during Holy Communion.

**What a joy to know that whoever and wherever we are,
if we trust and believe in Jesus, all we have to say is:
Just as I am, O Lamb of God,
I come and Jesus will take us unto Himself
and dwell within us for all eternity.**

Just As I am

*Just as I am - without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
-O Lamb of God, I come!*

*Just as I am - and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
-O Lamb of God, I come!*

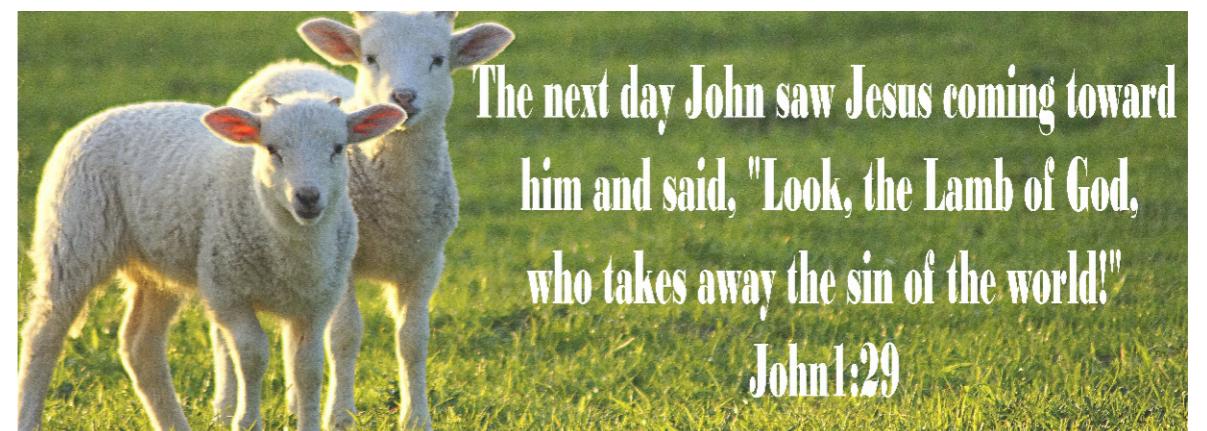
*Just as I am - though toss'd about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
-O Lamb of God, I come!*

*Just as I am - poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,
-O Lamb of God, I come!*

*Just as I am - Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
-O Lamb of God, I come!*

*Just as I am - Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
-O Lamb of God, I come!*

*Just as I am - of that free love
The breadth, length, depth, and height to prove
Here for a season, then above,
-O Lamb of God, I come*



Helens Bay Dental Practice

At Helens Bay Dental Practice, we offer a wide range of services

- Dental Implants
- Same Day Crowns
- Whitening for life
- Invisible Braces
- Denture Stabilisation
- Family dental care
- Complimentary consultations

Dr. Gareth Small BDS (QUB) 1990
Dental Practitioner MSc (QUB) 2002
Dental Aesthetic MSc (QUB) 2017
DSD/PMT/TEETH/EDENT/123D
NEDERLANDS/CPD



Phone: 028 911 855304
Web: www.helensbaydental.co.uk
E-mail: info@helensbaydental.co.uk
www.facebook.com/helensbaydental

D Clegg & Son
Electrical Contractor
Established: 1972

Domestic, Commercial, Agricultural & Industrial
Repairs & New Installations
Testing & Inspection
Emergency Call-Out
Free Estimates

Telephone: 028 9188 2609
Mobile: 07702 180205 (Darren)
Email: clegg304@btinternet.com

NICEIC APPROVED CONTRACTOR

scan

SCAN ALARMS & SECURITY SYSTEMS (UK) LTD

secure in the knowledge that we have you covered



24

Intruder alarm | Fire & associated systems | CCTV
Access control | Integrated systems | Total protection

BAFE NSI BSiQ Gold EASi Gold NSI Gold TÜV Approved

52 TRENCH ROAD | MALLUSK | NEWTOWNABBEY | BT36 4TY
+44(0)28 9034 2233 | info@scalarms.co.uk | www.scalarms.co.uk

FEHERTY TRAVEL LIMITED



THE DIFFERENCE IS OUR EXPERIENCE

1973 Sincere thanks to all who support us! 2017

WILLIAM McCUTCHEON
GARDEN SERVICES
ALL LAWN WORK CARRIED OUT

07752 737233



BANGOR PHYSIOTHERAPY PRACTICE

We offer a "hands on", holistic approach to physiotherapy

For treatment and management of: neck, back and spinal problems; sports injuries; rheumatological conditions and fibromyalgia; arthritis and joint conditions; neurological conditions; musculoskeletal problems and pain

FREE Counselling service
Pilates classes

5 Balloo Court, Bangor
BT19 7AT
Tel: 02891270932

Stables Groomsport

- ♦ Newly Refurbished Bistro with exciting new Lunch and Dinner Bistro Menus available
- ♦ Family friendly restaurant with Colouring, DVDs and Gameboys available for the kids
- ♦ Gordons Suite available for private hire for birthdays, christenings, weddings and any other family gathering
- ♦ Tel: 9146 4229
info@stablesandgordonssuite.co.uk

GORDONS WINE BAR SUITE

Groomsport Inn

New wholesome menu now being served - light snacks to hearty meals

Panoramic views over Groomsport and Belfast Lough

All major sporting events televised on the Big Screens including football, rugby etc.

Late bar with live entertainment every weekend

Two function rooms available for private hire for birthdays, christenings, weddings and any other family gathering

Cowley
Estate Agents & Mortgage Specialists

East Belfast Branch
36 Cregagh Road,
Belfast, BT6 9EQ
Phone: 028 9045 1248

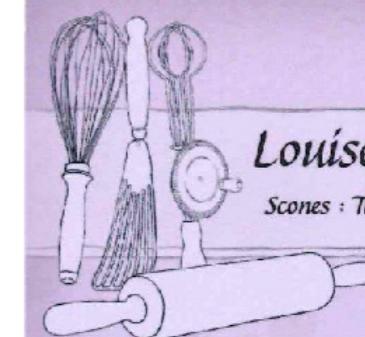
Residential Lettings Financial EPC

flutter by jo
07734374386

Qualified beauty therapist in Bangor specialising in:

- Butterfly Waxing
- Butterfly Manicure
- Butterfly Pedicure
- Butterfly Shellac polish
- Butterfly Tinting
- Butterfly Facials
- Butterfly Makeup application

Louise's Home Bakes
Scones : Traybakes : Biscuits : Desserts



Louise Milliken: 07759398970 Springwell Road, Groomsport
When placing an order please inform me of any food allergies.

Merry Christmas!

I hope that your Advent and Christmas seasons will be full of hope and joy this year! My life has been a bit of a whirlwind since writing last for the Easter issue. As I wrote that article, I was in my empty office preparing for our church's move to our new campus. We ended up moving the week before and the week of Holy Week, which was far from ideal for program staff and the source of many migraines. Our new campus is wonderful and it is great to have the staff all in one place. While it is a new sanctuary for us, those who designed it incorporated so many elements of the old sanctuary into its design that it has always felt like 'home.'



I had mentioned that in the summer, I would be taking a doctoral travel seminar to South Africa. Unfortunately, one too few people signed up for it and the class had to be canceled. However, to make up for it, they have allowed those of us who applied to go on that trip to join a masters level class. It is going to South Africa this upcoming January and has morphed into a joint MDiv/DMin class. Therefore, I will be in South Africa for nearly three weeks this January, two of the weeks with the class and some extra time to go on safari in Kruger National Park. The class should be interesting, the safari wonderful, and with this trip, I will have accomplished my goal of traveling to all six habitable continents. Now, that just leaves Antarctica... something for the future bucket list! With the summer travel seminar canceled, I quickly signed up for another class and took one on Economic Justice in the New Testament. One of my majors in university was economics and I thought this might be interesting. It was fascinating to look at Jesus' words in the Gospels with a completely new lens, understanding what he was saying and how it would have been heard given a 1st century economic outlook.

With my upcoming January class, I will have completed all of my elective classes for my doctorate. After that, it leaves me to do my dissertation and my "practicum" project, which is a project we design in our congregations and is meant to teach us something about our pastoral ministry. I am completing that project this year through the development of a 'social justice forum.' I have taken a group of seven diverse (politically, theologically and economically) members of our congregation open and willing to discuss social

justice issues from a Biblical standpoint. Part of the forum is to become more educated about social justice issues; so far we have looked at immigration on our Southern border, hunger in the US, and human trafficking. Part of this is also to show that a diverse group of people can actually have civil dialogue and work together on issues that are important, but that stereotypically tear people apart and entrench the divisions in our country. We are watching documentaries and having discussion and Bible study to go with it, but it will culminate in them working together jointly on a social justice project of their choosing that they will have to work together to accomplish. It is this aspect that they are most excited about and in the winter, we'll start discussing their ideas. This project should show that even people on polar opposites of the political or theological spectrum, can still work together for the common good!



My dissertation topic is not fully solidified, but I am hoping to do research in the area of preparation for ministry for ministers of word and sacrament who live with depression and/or anxiety. What do people living with these illnesses need to know before they enter the pastorate and how can the Presbytery best work with such candidates for ministry that they can thrive in their preparation and ordained ministry?

This fall brought yet another hurricane to our area. Every year that I have lived in South Carolina, we have either had a major hurricane or a 1000-year flood. Thankfully, I live in a place that has not sustained flooding or house damage apart from a few lost shingles on the roof. Thankfully, too, I did not have to evacuate this year, as I was on vacation in Louisiana, and was enjoying the sunshine of New Orleans that day that Hurricane Dorian blew through Myrtle Beach.

The highlight of the fall, was a five-day trip to Disney World. The weather was cool and the crowds were low as it was off-season, so it was absolutely splendid. We did every single ride in the park that we wanted to do and had a great time. A big highlight for me was meeting Tigger! After being Tigger for Halloween for the last 18 years or so, including most recently at our preschool's fall festival, I finally got to meet THE Tigger! The smile should say it all!

I am looking forward to the Advent and Christmas season ahead. My parents and my sister and her family will all be joining me for Christmas this year, the first Christmas we will have spent together as a family in 12 years! I pray that your Advent and Christmas seasons will be full of joy and love this year.

Richest blessings,
Christa



Carols By Candlelight
7:00pm, Sunday 22nd December
Followed By Mince Pies & Mulled Wine In The Walter Nelson Hall

The Spiritual Art Of Savoring

Hello everyone! I miss you all terribly, and I wanted to write a quick update and a few thoughts that I have been ruminating on lately.

LIFE IS CRAZY! When I left Groomsport, life has seemingly jumped up in stress and busyness as I dove back into school. I am not sure if this was a normal struggle for other interns, but it was a tough re-entry into American academic life. I have enjoyed the process, but it was like jumping off the quay into the ocean and being shocked by the cold water! I am serving as the prayer team director at a new church in Princeton called "Ecclesia" which is a Greek word for "the called out ones" or "the community". So, I go to "Church Church"! The community has been incredible, though I do miss my friends over in Ireland quite a bit! I had the privilege of seeing Paul and Catherine when they were over here and spending some time with them over dinner and breakfast, and it is as lovely to hear about how things are going. I am working part-time at a running store that I worked at before I left for Ireland, and I have loved being a part of that community again. I am currently in the midst of finding a job as a pastor for when I graduate, so please be praying for me in this process!

Amidst the business of the semester starting, church planting, finding a job, and working at the running store, I have been reflecting a lot about what it looks like to find peace amidst the busyness! Here are a few thoughts about that process.

Have you ever reveled in the last few moments of sunshine at the end of a long day?

One of my favorite spots in the entire world is a bench about ten minutes walk down the coastal path towards Ballyholme. It is one of a few places that I would walk to and sit after a long day of visiting, studying, and working. Whenever my headspace got a wee bit fuzzy, I would try and make myself walk down to the bench.

My bench was a thin place - a space to sit and wonder, to remember what has happened, and to try and make sense of "it all". When I inevitably failed to make sense of life, it was a place where I would sit and pray through what was happening and ask for God to be present with me in the midst of it. Sometimes, God would provide an answer quickly with a random thought, an impulse to act in a certain way, or a sense of peace that I have come to learn is God's hand working in the moment. What I found, however, was that more often what happened was that the longer I sat and thought, the more I found myself just being with God, enjoying his presence, and I savored the experiences I was working through regardless if they were positive or negative things.

It was within the silence that I found amidst the cawing of the gulls and the crash of the breakers that the Lord seemed most present. Perhaps it's because I was present before him, and chewing on the life that he had put before me, but I haven't really found an explanation for why that bench seemed so special to me. I found it easier to listen to God there than anywhere else.



First day

Mother Theresa was once asked by the American news anchor Dan Rather what happened when she prayed. Mother Theresa responded, "Well, I just listen." Rather then asked what God would say to her, and Mother Theresa said, "He just listens also. And, if you don't understand it, then I am not sure that I can explain it to you."

One of the major takeaways that I have from this last year as your assistant minister is that every minister needs to prioritize time to savor life with God. And, because ministers are not superhuman and struggle with questions of faith and struggle to endure same as everyone else, I firmly believe that this extends out to everyone in the world— we all can use some more spiritual savoring.

Us Presbyterians stand firmly in a tradition that is incredibly strong in its emphasis upon the rational, thinking side of life. And, I think that this is generally a brilliant aspect of faith. But when cold and unfeeling rationality rules everything that we do, we run the danger of ceasing to LOVE God. Instead, we find ourselves merely assenting to a series of ideas and doctrines. God isn't interested in what we THINK. He is interested in what we LOVE. He wants us to tune into him and bring our entire lives before him because that is what you do when you love someone: you involve them in the depths of your life, no matter how ugly it gets. When we do so, we discover that God is tuned into the deepest happenings of our lives, and he wants to be present with us within life.

Practising contemplative worship is hard. Our entire world and faith tradition is working against us slowing down to be present with God. It's risky because it means that we have to make ourselves vulnerable with God, but we also risk missing his presence and potentially getting hurt as our expectations are not met. It's confusing to sit in silence before God, because it is not the most tangible or clear practice.

Rev Paul Dalzell, Catherine Dalzell, Ryan Pearce



cont...

But, what if the practice of contemplative prayer is what will restore your soul? What if slowing down is what this world needs? What if, instead of boredom or busyness, God has designed us for PRESENCE? What if what we need to step forward into deeper faith is not more information but actually more awareness of God's presence?

One of the best parts about my trip around Europe at the end of July was actually the last week of the journey, because it was a week that I got to spend with Matthew and Adam and 4,500 of our best friends at a week-long Christian festival full of worship, teaching, and time set aside for reflection. It was incredible what happened when we paused from our daily lives and focused our time upon seeking out God's presence. My faith was encouraged not in the teaching (which was incredible), or even in the worship (which was delightfully happy-clappy), but was actually in the space created in each of the sessions for individuals to be present with God and allow him to work.

Would you want to try this?

I usually begin with a simple enough prayer, something like "Jesus be present" or "Holy Spirit, come." And then, I just wait. Sometimes it's a few moments, other times it can be a while longer. But, the focus of my time of contemplation is twofold: first, it is always to know Jesus more and love him more. We come to know people through their presence, not through information about them. Secondly, it was to be resolute in striking through the distractions that inevitably would come along.

The Enemy wants nothing less than for believers to be so distracted by life that they are unable to tune into God's voice. CS Lewis wrote in his incredible book "The Screwtape Letters" an exchange between the demon Screwtape and his nephew Wormwood in which Screwtape says: "once he accepts the distraction as his present problem and lays that before the Enemy [God] and makes it the main theme of his prayers and his endeavours, then, so far from doing good, you have done harm."

I hope this small meditation encourages you to continue on in prayer before God, because God wants to meet with you and encourage you in your daily life that God is good, God loves you, and God desires to do life with you!

Grace,
Ryan Pearce



*John 14:27 - Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.
I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*



Ryan and his dad in New York City

Yes, that's me sitting on top of the Berlin wall in 1990.

On the 13th August 1961, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) commenced the building of the Berlin Wall where it stood until November 1989. This effectively cut off the Allied Sector of West Berlin (French, British and American forces) from East Berlin which in turn was surrounded by East Germany.

East Germany was under the influence of Russia (the other Allied Force) and became a socialist state known as the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Prior to the wall being built, 3.5 million people had escaped from the GDR into West Germany where they could then move freely into other parts of Europe. The wall and fencing were constructed to prevent this, guarded by watchtowers with armed guards with the instruction to shoot anybody trying to escape.

The government had told the inhabitants that they were being protected from fascist elements conspiring to 'prevent the will of the people'.

During the wall's lifetime, 100,000 people have tried to escape from the GDR with 5,000 being successful, but sadly also with the death of over 136 people.

Nearly 30 years ago, I visited West Berlin in April 1990 as a Lieutenant in the Army Cadet Force with a party of 12 teenage boys from Ards and the North Down Area. We stayed as guests of the Irish Guards in Spandau. During our visit, I arranged a coach day trip into East Berlin via the infamous border crossing point known as 'Check Point Charlie' showing our passports to the GDR guards.

What a contrast it was from the busy, bright lights and consumerism of West Berlin to the lifeless, grey, sad area of East Berlin. I recall seeing senior citizens queuing up at a door in the wall, where they were allowed to cross into West Berlin, this was only a recently granted privilege. I remember being told that only in February of 1990 had the population of East Berlin been able to get a banana. To obtain a car there was a waiting list of two years, you were given a designated petrol station to get your fuel from, which was not close to where you lived!

Sadly today there are still walls being constructed, not just physical ones but mental ones. We are going through highly contentious times when information and disinformation abound. "It's them un's fault" as we say here. This very magazine recalls the flight from persecution which our forefathers as Presbyterians experienced.

Let us remember as Christians we are a Welcoming Community of God's People and let us work to tear down barriers and not construct them.

Ray McWhinney

Berlin Wall



The Rifleman And The Major

Brian McClelland

THE RIFLEMAN and the MAJOR: DEATH at MESSINES, 1917

Death came at dawn to the rifleman. The major, critically wounded, survived into the afternoon. They were on the same side but had never met. It did not matter. All that mattered was that they were brothers in arms, fighting a common enemy for a common cause. One was an unemployed West Belfast Unionist from Ghent Street, a member of the Church of Ireland, the other an Irish Nationalist Catholic, a lawyer and Member of Parliament from Wexford. It did not matter, for they were to meet their Maker together amidst the horror, the smoke and noise of that fateful day in Flanders.

Rifleman James (Jimmy) Lyness lied about his age. He was barely seventeen when he took the King's shilling and enlisted in the 9th Royal Irish Rifles. A few months previously, he had lost both his mother and grandmother to typhoid fever. Without a job, the allure of war was all-embracing. It afforded him the opportunity of escaping the misery of the mean streets where he was born to join the many Belfast boys in the supposed glamour of a righteous campaign.



Major William (Willie) Redmond was in his fifties when he joined the 6th Royal Irish Regiment. For 34 years he had been an MP at Westminster, variously representing Wexford, North Fermanagh and East Clare. Descended from Catholic gentry of Norman origins, he was the brother of John Redmond, also an Irish Nationalist MP. They had called on their fellow countrymen to join the British Army in the fight against Germany, in the misplaced belief that Home Rule would be the prize for their loyalty.

The prelude to the Third Battle of Ypres was to be the capture of Messines Ridge on 7th June 1917. The plan was to surprise the Germans by exploding a series of huge mines under their front line trenches and then attack them by a rapid advance. The men of the 16th (Irish) Division and the 36th (Ulster) Division were to advance together for the first time into the heat of the battlefield - Catholic and Protestant awaiting alike "th'inevitable hour".*

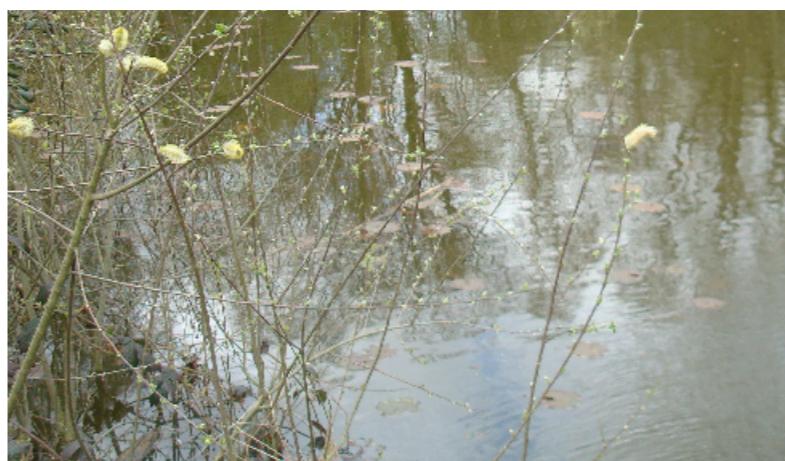


Their target was the capture of Wytschaete village, called "Whitesheet" by the men. A heavy mist had enveloped the whole front. At 3.10 am the detonation of the mines at strategic points across the battlefield signalled the beginning of the attack. Nearly a million pounds of explosives illuminated the dark ridge of Messines throwing up high towers of earth and smoke. It was a vision of hell. The ground shook as though in an earthquake and the noise could be heard in London and Dublin. The 36th Division immediately began their advance. The 9th R.I.R. went over the top, line after line. Rifleman James Lyness was in the front line, crossing No Man's Land. The mine at the knoll of Spanbroekmolen detonated 15 seconds late catching the advancing Ulstermen unawares and throwing them off their feet by its sheer force. Sadly, a number were hit as the debris of stones and clay rained down on them. Rifleman Lyness was killed instantly.

To their left, the 16th Division, shoulder-to-shoulder with the 36th, were also making their charge. Major Willie Redmond led his men out of the trenches, pistol in hand, words of encouragement on his lips. Approaching their objective, he was shot several times and fell.

Private John Meeke, of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, from County Antrim, a stretcher-bearer with the 36th, saw Redmond fall. Despite the heavy machine-gun fire and artillery, he reached the major and bandaged his wounds. Meeke was hit by shrapnel and bled profusely, but steadfastly refused the major's order to save himself. For his selfless act of bravery, John Meeke stretcher-bearer was awarded the Military Medal.

Major Redmond was taken to the Field Dressing Station. He was 56 years old and too weak to survive his injuries. He died several hours later and was buried in the garden of a convent at Loker. At his request, soldiers from both the 16th (Irish) Division and the 36th (Ulster) Division provided his Guard of Honour.



Spanbroekmolen Mine Crater - Known As Pool Of Peace

Unlike other war dead, his body was not exhumed and reburied. In October 1919 his widow, Eleanor, visited his grave and was pleased with how it had been kept by the Sisters. She requested that his body be kept where it lay, in the care of the nuns of Loker. Today it is the responsibility of the people of Loker.

After the war, John Meeke returned home and married his childhood sweetheart, Kathleen Craig, at Derrykeighan Parish Church, Dervock on 17th May 1922. Tragically, he developed tuberculosis and died on 7th December 1923.

Six years ago, with two of my sons, Gavin and Michael, I visited the grave of my mother's brother, my uncle, James Lyness. He is buried with his fallen comrades in the beautiful little cemetery of Lone Tree at Spanbroekmolen, just a matter of yards from where he fell. In the almost one hundred years since James Lyness had died, we were the first relatives to view his last resting place. My mother believed his body had been lost. There was no family message on the gravestone, indicating that the family perhaps weren't aware of the grave's existence.

During the war, Redmond retained his seat in Parliament. In March 1917, some three months before he was killed, Redmond addressed Westminster making a heartfelt plea to the government to resolve the Irish question:

"Why must it be that, when British soldiers and Irish soldiers are dying side by side, this eternal quarrel should go on?"

*Elegy written in a Country Churchyard by Thomas Gray.



New Elders



The Presbytery of Ards ordained and installed three new elders in Groomsport Presbyterian on the 22nd of September.

The new Elders are Dr Michael Steele, Sharon Goldie and Roy McWhinney (front centre).

They are pictured with Rev Paul Dalzell and Clerk of Session, Alastair McQuoid, (back right) along with members of the Ards Presbytery Commission.

A Christmas Gift

On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. (Matthew 2:11)

There are over 600 references to essential oils and the aromatic plants they were extracted from in the Bible. The 14 principal oils are Myrrh, Frankincense, calamus, cedarwood, cinnamon, cassia, galbanum, onycha, spikenard, hyssop, sandalwood, myrtle, cypress, rose of Sharon.

As we remember the gifts that were presented to baby Jesus from the Magi, I wonder if we think about the oils gifted to our Saviour lord.

Frankincense is the gum-resin taken from the branches and trunks of the *Boswellia* tree genus. Its uses are a cure-all oil and its also used to enhance meditation and spiritual consciousness. It was used to anoint the newborn sons of kings and priests. Nowadays, frankincense is more likely to be used for treating depression, allergies, headaches, brain damage and so on.

Myrrh, it is also a gum-resin from the trunk and limbs of a desert tree in the same family as frankincense. In biblical times, pregnant mothers would anoint themselves for protection against infection and enhance feelings of well-being. Myrrh was also used blended in perfumes and ointments. After birth, it was used on the umbilical cord of a newborn to protect from infection. It was also believed to cut off generational curses inherited from ancestors. In more modern years, Myrrh is used as an antiseptic, also for balancing the thyroid and endocrine system. It can be used to help treat bronchitis and fungal infections such as athlete's foot and ringworm.

As these valuable treasures were given to Jesus; consider Him a treasure, given to us to cherish not only this Christmas but on through our lives.

Weekly Activities In The Walter Nelson Hall Complex

SUNDAY

Sunday School & Bible Class 10:15 am
Congregational Coffee Mornings (Last Sunday in the month 10:15 - 11:15 am
excluding June - August & December)

MONDAY

PW (2nd & 4th Mondays) 8:00 pm
BB Anchor Boys & Junior Section (5-11 yrs) 7:00 - 8:00 pm

TUESDAY

Tuesday Club (1st Tuesday in every month) 2:00 pm
Tuesday Film Club (3rd Tuesday in the month Oct - March) 2:00 pm
Leisure Group 7:30 - 9:00 pm

WEDNESDAY

Badminton Club 10:00 am
Friendship Lunch (last Wednesday in the month, Oct – April, 1:00 pm
sign up sheet available in the church)
Indoor Bowling Club 7:15 pm
Midweek Prayer and Bible Study 7:30 pm

THURSDAY

Brownies 6:30 - 7:45 pm
Rainbow Guides 6:30 - 7:30 pm
Guides 7:30 - 9:00 pm

SATURDAY

Coffee Mornings (June-August incl) 10:30 am - noon



Forthcoming Services

Sunday 22nd December, 7:00 pm

Carols By Candlelight

Wednesday 25th December, 10:30 am

Christmas Day Family Service

Sunday 5th January, 11:30 am

New Year Communion Service



Dates For Your Diary

Wednesday 29th January, 1:00 pm

Friendship Lunch

Wednesday 26th February, 1:00 pm

Friendship Lunch

Monday 2nd March, 7:45 pm

Congregational AGM

Saturday 21st March, 10:30 am

PW Coffee Morning

Wednesday 25th March, 1:00 pm

Friendship Lunch

